



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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**North Carolina Board of Transportation
Environmental Planning and Policy Committee
Meeting Minutes for December 5, 2001**

A meeting of the Environmental Planning and Policy Committee was held on December 5, 2001 at 8:00 AM in the Board Room (Room 150) of the Transportation Building. Nina Szlosberg chaired the meeting. Board of Transportation members that attended were:

Conrad Burrell
Nancy Dunn
Doug Galyon
Frank Johnson
Margaret Kluttz

Cam McRae
Nina Szlosberg
Alan Thornburg
Paul Waff
Lanny Wilson

Other attendees included:

David Allsbrook
Kay Batey
Roberto Canales
Craig Deal
Larry Helms
Len Hill
Mike Holder
Pat Ivey

Berry Jenkins
Neil Lassiter
Carl McCann
Ashley Memory
Tancred Miller
Mike Mills
Sandy Nance
Ken Pace

Lubin Prevatt
Bill Rosser
Roger Sheats
Roy Shelton
Charles Tomlinson
Jim Trogden
Steve Wall
Ron Watson

Ms. Nina Szlosberg began the meeting by welcoming everyone and noting that this committee meeting would adjourn at 8:45 AM to facilitate a joint off-campus meeting of the Rail and Transit and Ferry Subcommittees. Tancred Miller of the North Carolina Sierra Club was introduced as a guest.

The meeting minutes from the November 7, 2001 meeting of the Environmental Planning and Policy Committee were approved as written.

Ms. Szlosberg introduced the topic for the meeting – Transit and Air Quality. The Department of Transportation received a national report from the National Sierra Club entitled, “Clearing the Air with Transit Spending.” The report graded cities on smog from transportation systems by looking at the amount of smog from cars and trucks per resident in relation to the cities’ spending on public transportation. The finding is that there is a relationship between an increased investment on public transportation and a decrease in the amount of vehicle smog. Ms. Szlosberg

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suggested that North Carolina's "numbers" would look better today than they do in the published report since the legislature recently (post report publication) increased the state's investment in public transportation. The report's recommendations included:

1. Increase amount of money set aside for public transit and begin to equal mix of spending
2. Plan development wisely (ie, shorten car trips and facilitate public transportation)
3. Support public involvement in the transportation and land use planning process.

David King and Sanford Cross provided handouts (graphs) that show transit funding from 1993 (\$2.6 million) through 2004 (\$139 million). While this increase in public transit spending in North Carolina was not reflected in the National Sierra Club report, the press release put out by the North Carolina Sierra Club did include information about this increased allocation for transit spending.

This year the legislature recognized that Raleigh and Charlotte are starting regional rail programs that require a 25% state match; therefore, the legislature made provisions for a portion of the cash balances of the Trust Fund to be spent for matching funds for these regional rail programs through 2004. (The legislature has more work to do to ensure the matches are in place for the completing the Charlotte and Raleigh rail systems, in addition to that which is planned for the Triangle area). In addition to the 25% matching funds for the Raleigh and Charlotte rail systems, the legislature provide a lesser amount for operating assistance for to all transit systems in North Carolina and capital assistance to rural human service transportation. David King noted that each county in the state currently has a rural human service transportation (ranges from a 6- to 8-person operation to a 50- to 60-person operation). Providing enough capital assistance to keep these programs and vehicles operational is challenging.

The South Boulevard light rail project is the first of its kind to begin in the Charlotte area. The project goes from the downtown convention center in Charlotte toward Pineville. South Carolina plans to eventually extend service into South Carolina to Rock Hill. This project is a good example of integrating transportation and land use planning. Developers in the area are already planning new developments along this corridor, in addition to redevelopment, in response to this impending rail project. The developers and their financial supporters have confidence in these rail projects, believing that they are credible and that they will come to fruition. Charlotte anticipates the rail service to begin in 2005, with Raleigh following in 2008.

David King stated that the first five minutes that an automobile is started is when that most pollution is released. Once the car warms up (after about five minutes), pollution created by the vehicle decreases considerably. Therefore, by eliminating automobile "start-ups" by using a light rail system, the amount of pollutants in the air can be reduced, creating an improvement in the overall air quality in an area.

Nina Szlosberg asked how NCDOT uses transit funding to provide transportation service to those in rural areas who, without vehicular transportation, cannot get to work and, consequently, may have difficulties supporting their families. David King referred to Governor Hunt's Welfare to Work Program, where "Work First Transportation" has been a major element. The General Assembly has provided some funding for that part of the program. NCDOT has also documented and distributed "best practices." Some of NCDOT's human service transportation assistance programs include components that are concentrated on Work First, and we have made money available to all 100 counties for a number of years specifically for that purpose.

Sanford Cross stated that the General Assembly provides \$1 million per year that is distributed throughout the counties. The program started in 1988 initially to help during the transition period between when persons on welfare get off welfare, are gainfully employed, until they are able to make enough money to support themselves, including their transportation needs. In addition, the Department also started another program two years ago through a federal grant for job access or reverse commute to assist further with people going from welfare to work. NCDOT has created rural vanpools through this program. The challenge is that people are spread out in the rural areas and don't always go to the same common point for employment. In addition, there is a lot of turnover with the program due to job changes and those people that move out of the area.

Sanford Cross offered that if anyone has identified a need where there are people that have jobs that need transportation, to please let him know and he would work on getting van pools in those areas.

NCDOT is currently conducting a survey to determine where transit needs exist. NCDOT has contacted Departments of Social Services and employers (employers with 25 employees or more and that would hire Work First employees). In addition, NCDOT wants to focus on the areas east of I-95 and west of I-77. Needs have also been identified in the coastal areas, especially during the peak summer season. The point of the survey is to provide transportation in areas where there is a demonstrated need to match potential employees without transportation and available jobs. The employers and/or the social service departments help provide funding.

Ms. Szlosberg asked how transit needs show up in the TIP programming process. David King indicated that the needs must first be identified by the local government as part of their local TIP request. NCDOT is hopeful that the local governments are considering transit, van pools and other options as a way of improving their air quality and providing transportation options in their areas.

The process has started as a statewide effort to tie the regional rail to other parts of the state. Decisions will have to be made in the short term as to where to make the other ties to the system. Specifically, the decision for the corridor between Wilmington and Raleigh to run through Goldsboro or Fayetteville is currently unresolved. Eventually, we may be able to provide rail service from both Goldsboro and Fayetteville, but funding is limited in the near-term.

A joint planning effort is almost complete for a regional rail service that leads to the high-speed rail corridor from Charlotte to Washington, DC. The first phase of a tiered Environmental Impact Statement, which analyzes nine different corridor options, should be announced within the next 60 days. Three of the options involve incorporating Forsyth County into inter-city rail system.

The next meeting for the Environmental Planning and Policy Committee is scheduled for Wednesday, January 9, 2002 at 8:00 AM in the Board Room (Room 150) of the Transportation Building.

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